



A nonprofit corporation

THE BIRCH BARK

Fall 2012

P.O. Box 148, Waterford, Maine 04088

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Rich Deering '73, Alumni Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

THE ALUMNI NEWS LETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

I'm delighted to pen this edition of the *Birch Bark*, honoring Rich Deering and Mike Mattson. My family cherishes a deep relationship with Birch Rock because of these exceptional men.

Back in the spring of '99, my son Charles told me lots of his friends in 4th grade would be going to camp. He wanted to try camping. Great, I thought, but how could I make it happen? I called a camp advisor and laid out our requirements: all boys, rustic, old-fashioned, cooperative instead of competitive, and far from our home in New York. She gave me a couple of options.

I called Birch Rock and spoke with Rich and Mike. Just talking with them over the phone was enough to convince me that Birch Rock was perfect. On the strength of those conversations, and the enticing brochure, I signed Charles up. Never saw the camp until it was time to drop Charles off with his trunk.

Meeting these directors extraordinaire at camp confirmed that Birch Rock was, and always will be, the best. They said they would co-parent with my husband Roger and me, and they meant it (their co-parenting still goes on!).

Rich and Mike ARE Birch Rock. They embody the camp's essential qualities: excellence in all things, loyalty, dedication, perseverance, compassion, embrace of new challenges. Birch Rock is stronger than ever because of the work of our directors. They are the consummate team. Their mutual respect and friendship and synergy of talents produce powerful results. Birch Rock may be the smallest boys camp in Maine, but it creates a colossal impact on all of our lives.

Go on Facebook or email at birchrock@birchrock.org — express your gratitude to Rich and Mike for their decades of commitment.



May they continue to transform the lives of Birch Rockers for years to come.

Francie Campbell
Trustee; Chair of
'The Council'; Mom
of Charles '99
and Counselor
Harry Netzer '01

KINGS OF THE HILL



Mike Mattson & Rich Deering

Summer 2012—a season of awesome milestones for Birch Rock Camp. Rich Deering celebrated his 40th season at the Rock, and his 10th as Alumni and Community Director. Mike Mattson reached his 30th year at Birch Rock, and his 10th anniversary as Camp Director.

Camp hit full enrollment, for the first time since 2007 and the downturn in the economy. Head Counselor Ryan 'Ryno' Massey fired up the most talented, senior, and veteran-heavy staff in our history. We passed our ACA accreditation again this summer with flying colors.

This *Birch Bark* offers tribute to Rich and Mike, the men who impel us to be the best boys camp imaginable! Seth Brewster, Chair of the Board of Trustees, puts it this way: "Through all their work, Rich and Mike continue to breathe life into Birch Rock, and make stronger my grandparents Chief and Onie's vision of an incomparable camp for boys."

A decade of great achievement, in short, is what these leaders have delivered. Nearly ten years ago, the Board of Trustees fashioned a sweeping strategic plan for our facilities, core mission, program, staffing, and financial health.

Rich and Mike have turned that vision into a dazzling reality. Our campus: we've built a new boathouse, Chief's Cabin, and the Brewster Health Lodge. Our mission: we have re-dedicated Birch Rock to our found-

ers' focus on outdoor education, camp craft, and wilderness trips. Our program: daily activities are uncommon and life-changing. Staffing: we have a supremely talented team of veteran Birch Rockers, professional educators, and counselors who aspire to become teachers. Educators Chief and Onie would be especially proud of this.

Birch Rock's financial health is sound, and we now extend campership aid to almost 20 percent of our boys. This community proves that the ethos 'Help the Other Fellow' is alive, and changing lives.



Rich & Roxie

Anyone who meets Rich Deering pegs him immediately as a people-person. His greatest gift to Birch Rock is his genius at building lasting relationships, with campers, families, alumni, and the wider Maine community. Rich fell hard for Birch Rock as a nine-year-old camper in '73. His first season was Chief Brewster's last. And as Mike Herzig (alum, trustee, and camp dad) points out, "While Chief and Rich overlapped for only a few weeks in 1973, no single individual has brought more continuity to the Birch Rock family over the last four decades than Rich."

He's worn every hat here: camper, counselor, Waterfront Director, Head Counselor and BRC's first full-time Camp Director. Rich absorbed every detail he learned along the way, and was the best source of tradition and lore when there was no written camp history. He's the vital link between BRC's legends of the past and its present day heroes.

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Rich as a camper in the 70s

Rich's standing in the Portland business community, his leadership roles in the Maine summer camp industry and the American Camp Association, and his strong ties to his alma mater Colby College add up to countless connections that benefit Birch Rock. Rich inspires us all to be camp ambassadors, and to do our part to keep Birch Rock flourishing.

Rich thrives on juggling demanding camp projects and his active real estate practice with REMAX By the Bay, and is always looking ahead. He stays grounded each summer by taking a break from office work and heading down to the waterfront to teach swimming to the youngest Birch Rockers.



Mike & Ollie

Mike Mattson is the ideal partner for Rich, bringing markedly different skills to the job. Rich is the extrovert; Mike the quieter artist, musician, and source of endless imaginative energy at camp. As Mike Herzig puts it: "Nobody knows what turns on these campers like Mike does. He brings a level of creativity and spontaneity to the program that we never had before, and he puts together a dream team of a staff each summer."

Rich credits Mike with a pinpoint focus and tremendous organizational skills. Mike knows it all and has done it all—camper, counselor, Waterfront Director, Head Counselor, Co-Director, and Camp Director. His exceptional talent is in coaching staff members to reach greater levels of leadership. Mike sets the bar high, and brings cohesiveness and discipline to the ranks.

Mike's artistry is evident all over camp and on our website. The Lodge is filled with elaborate plaques of Mike's making. He is a talented photographer who supplies the Birch Blog with marvelous shots of campers and nature. Campfire really gets Mike's creative juices flowing; he's renowned for hilarious skits, costumes, and bongo drumming.

One of Mike's greatest achievements as a camper at the Rock was earning his 15th archery badge. He was 15 years old when he became an official American Archer. Only a handful of Birch Rockers have reached the pinnacle in archery like Mike.



Mike in the 90s

We depend upon this camp that so enriches our sons and our families. Everybody looks to Rich and Mike to keep Birch Rock strong. But we each need to do our part, joining with these extraordinary men, to keep our beloved camp around for generations to come.



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ACCREDITED
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American Camping Association

BIRCH BRIEFS

Birch Rock's *Decade Club* Adds Three New Members in 2012

Counselors Alex McLaughlin, Zachary Lynn, and Camp Nurse Cathy Roland are the latest inductees into the official Birch Rock *Decade Club* this summer.



Alex McLaughlin



Zachary Lynn

Both Alex and Zach are long-term Birch Rock campers, Maine Wilderness Adventure graduates, lifeguards, CITS, and now camp counselors. These two young leaders are true Birch Rock gentlemen, showing dedication, integrity, talent, and the drive to give back to others.

Alex is from Skillman, New Jersey. He is a tri-athlete and fitness guru, and teaches mountain biking and baseball at camp. Alex is in his senior year at Lawrenceville Academy in New Jersey.

Zach ('Pickles') hails from New York City. He is one of camp's primary tennis and kayak instructors. Zach is a junior at Carleton College in Minnesota.



Cathy Roland

Cathy is a certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and has worked in school-based health programs here in Maine. Her last challenge was teaching Nursing at the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona. Cathy is now completing her doctorate in Nursing and has returned full-time to Maine. The boys of Birch Rock consider Cathy our own 'Wonder Woman.' She keeps us healthy and focused on all-around wellbeing. She loves to share her passion for the outdoors, fitness, Maine, and the spirit of 'Help The Other Fellow.' Cathy is an extraordinary professional and camp mother for our community.

Birch Rock's Newest Whales

Seven amazing swimmers persevered around the Lake McWain perimeter this season: Curtis Alexander, Gage Wheeler, Jonathan Tuffy, Patrick McLaughlin, Nathan Howard, Walker Grimes, and Zachary Bamberger. Congratulations to all seven Whales!

Seven Complete Counselor-In-Training Season

Under the leadership of Mike 'Mystro' Davis and Erik Joelsson, seven outstanding Birch Rock gentlemen completed leadership training and apprenticeships this past summer: Matt Burke of Naples, Florida; Spaulding Goetze of Highland Ranch, Colorado; Jeremy Lifter of New Albany, Ohio; Naropa Perez of Bronx, New York; Nick Ray of Cumberland, Maine; and Brandyn Robida of Clinton, Connecticut. These gentlemen also earned their American Red Cross Lifeguarding Certification.

New Trustees and Vice Chair to BRC Board

On August 2, 2012, the BRC Trustees elected Bruce and Arlene Whichard of Waterford, Maine to serve a 3-year term. Bruce and Arlene are the proud parents of Camper Jared Whichard. Bruce's father worked at neighboring Camp Waganaki for many decades. Welcome to our newest trustees!

Bob Tuffy of Hanover, Massachusetts, was elected to a two-year term as Vice Chair of the Trustees. Bob is the proud grandfather of Jonathan Tuffy, Matthew Straut, and Andrew Straut. Bob owns a company that provides adult community housing and services to seniors in the Greater Boston area.

Rich Deering Elected a Trustee of McWain Pond Association

At the annual meeting of the McWain Pond Association held at Birch Rock Camp on July 21, Rich Deering was elected to serve as a trustee. Rich was graciously given the seat of neighbor Henry Plate, who had served on the Association's board for 40 years.

BRC Passes Latest Accreditation Process with American Camp Association

Every three years the ACA sends fellow camp director visitors to audit over 300 health, safety and program quality standards of Birch Rock Camp. After weeks of preparation prior to and during the camp season, the administrative staff demonstrated excellent adherence to the highest standards of compliance: site, transportation, health and wellness, operational management, human resources, and program activities and trips. This visit was summed up by Lead Visitor Nancy McCann of Tripp Lake Camp: "You have a fantastic camp of counselors and kids. You have so much to be proud of in what you are delivering each and every day. It was a honor to visit BRC."

From the Summit of Katahdin to the Shores of Maine's Rocky Coast – 8 New Maine Wilderness Adventurers

Congratulations to Peter Brewster of Concord, New Hampshire; Noah Keates of Hopkinton, Massachusetts; Peter Klein of Skillman, New Jersey; Gabe Kolbert of Portland, Maine; Trevor Perkins of Hopkinton, Mass.; Ben Wagner of Boylston, Mass.; Sam Wayne of Newton, Mass.; and Jared Whichard of Waterford, Maine. These intrepid young men participated in camp's 3-week MWA Program under the fine leadership of Trip Director Ryan Royalty and Trip Counselor Taos Young. The program included backpacking, sea kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, and hiking expeditions throughout the state of Maine.



Maine Wilderness Adventures

THOUGHTS FROM JUNIOR MAINE GUIDE TESTING CAMP 2012

By Counselor Gabe Dreyer '04



Patrick, Gabe & Walker

From the moment we pull into testing camp in Oquossuc, Maine on a hot Monday in July, I know that Birch Rock is going to leave its mark. The Junior Maine Guide program is one of the few instances each summer that we Birch Rock boys can and do seize the opportunity to prove ourselves as true gentlemen who have mastered the woods, in front of a dozen registered Maine Guides and fellow campers and counselors from around the state.

The Junior Maine Guide curriculum is taught at a dozen camps in Maine, where campers between the ages of 14 and 17 develop skills in trip leading and outdoor living. They are then evaluated alongside several other groups during a five-day testing camp in the Rangeley Lakes region. Candidates are tested on subjects ranging from axemanship to orienteering to cooking. This is a fairly new addition to the Birch Rock program, as we have only run JMG twice here before 2009; once in the 1930s and again in 1986.

Participation in the program is an incredibly unique experience. Campers are selected based on their past experience and involvement in Birch Rock's trip and campcraft programs, and must study for four weeks leading up to testing camp.

Note: This month of studying takes place during these campers' alleged "summer vacation."

Candidates are assigned a campsite on the first day and are then expected to set up their tent and a large kitchen tarp. This tarp is the staple of their group encampment, under which all their gear is stored, all food is served and prepared, and downtime is spent to study and relax. On Monday afternoon they cook the first of ten meals which are served to a rotating set of examiners and counselors. During the day, when the candidates are not at mealtime, they are running around completing the twenty written and practical tests that make up the certification.

The week requires a level of independence not encountered by most boys and girls at this age. This past summer, senior campers Walker Grimes and Patrick McLaughlin attended testing camp. While I—as the counselor/instructor—have inherited the tendency that my own parents have to frequently check up on my campers, there was no real input from me to them during the week other than study assistance. There were many split-second decisions to be made by the candidates without the help of a counselor.

As counselors, we are assigned miscellaneous tasks at testing camp (water and trash runs; test proctoring; etc.) while our campers are off taking tests. They are at testing headquarters with the examiners for most of the day, and their responsibility as ambassadors of Birch Rock lies in their command. Patrick and Walker proved to be the true embodiment of Birch Rock gentlemen that week, and the comments I received from other counselors and testers (especially after meals) made me proud that they were rep-

resenting camp. The help I saw them offer to their neighbors during the week was certainly commendable, and their behavior illustrated not only our values, but the atmosphere of testing camp as a whole as well. It would of course be unfair to claim that Walker and Pat were the only candidates who were quick to lend a hand to their peers. In fact, the JMG environment is one in which everyone has their own goals and motivations, while still offering help to others. This help could be a few eggs for a meal, a tree identification book, or a compass. From the counselor's perspective, I am lucky to be able to learn and share ideas with other counselors regarding each camp's respective trip and campcraft programs. This is an indispensable asset to our camps that would be hard to find in another setting.

It is also quite remarkable that there are close to 70 teenagers at JMG who are in a voluntary testing environment in the woods without phones or internet, and who are perfectly capable of connecting socially. This organic and non-competitive atmosphere is a rare find in today's world, and while day-to-day camp is socially and electronically stress-free, JMG is an even deeper removal from our technology-driven society.

The independent thinking and success that JMGs are introduced to is fundamental to the development of these newly-minted young adults. In renowned psychologist Michael Thompson's recent book, *Homesick and Happy*, the author discusses how important moments of accomplishment are at camp. When kids are away from their parents' gratification of their children's successes, sharing their own pride with their friends and twenty-year-old counselors is markedly more satisfying.

As testing camp is a more drastic separation from technology and stress than summer camp alone, the independent satisfaction of success is also enhanced at JMG. Imagine the power of being surrounded solely by new acquaintances in the middle of nowhere, and how much more personal these accomplishments would be, even more so than being with camp friends at camp.

If you ask any camper, staff member, parent, or alumnus about a summer spent at Birch Rock, they will absolutely say that it is one of the most powerful experiences any young man (or adult) can have. That a program such as JMG can both amplify and be amplified by a camp like BRC is astonishing, and is certainly something to be valued.

Unlike the official Maine Guide license or a camp trip leader permit, the Junior Maine Guide card does not hold any real value. This makes the accomplishment exemplify what it means to value the process of learning and goal setting and the journey to the goal rather than the end result. No candidate ever forgets his or her experience at testing camp, and the skills, friendships, and stories that one finds there are truly timeless.



RE-ENTRY AND THE LASTING GIFTS OF CAMP

by Seth Wheeler '80s and P'00s



Seth, Emma and Gage Wheeler

Start with the simple things. He tucks in his shirt. He pops out of bed at 7:15 a.m. to the sound of a bell that only he can hear. He puts his napkin in his lap. He sits up straight. And...wait for it...he makes his bed! His speech is peppered with bizarre expressions and turns of phrase (I'm still unclear what a 'gnar' is or why it must be shredded). After six years at camp, we're used to these little postseason miracles and eccentricities. But this year, his last as a camper, we've seen the emergence of something new. It's something that I'm fortunate to have experienced at his age as well – the formation of a genuine brotherhood.

When I was a 15 year-old Birch Rock Counselor-in-Training, my seven fellow CITs and I helped build Pete's Palace. If you knew Pete Haas, the cabin's namesake, you'd find it fitting that it's always been home to the oldest campers – the handsomest brutes on campus. For two weeks in 1982 while Omar Moxie, Don Munn and a few others were finishing up construction of Pete's Palace, we eight CITs lived a nomadic existence – our trunks stored under the old Lodge in a corner of the wood shop while we slept where we could find space in the other cabins. To tell you the truth, we were a little shell-shocked. Just the year before we were the senior campers, the golden boys who swam Whales, beat Waganaki and were the star gentlemen at the Arcadia Garden Party. Now we were peeling potatoes under the critical eye of Harry Cleaves and banging nails in the hot sun. This was a different Birch Rock. But adversity and a little hard work has a way of building character and we grew closer because of it.

My son won't have this identical trial, but he and his Pete's Palace cabinmates are in for other challenges next year when they embark on the path to becoming Birch Rock counselors. And they seem to know it. Never before has he come home from camp and spoken so consistently of "we" and "us." The rituals, the inside jokes, the way they know and accept each other's vulnerabilities...it's all part of the male bonding experience in all its corny and wonderful glory. When they spend the rest of the year maintaining a Facebook façade, never

quite giving themselves to others, it makes me happy to know that there's a place where they are each valued and unequivocally accepted...a place where their whole is greater than the sum of their parts. This is the rising of a new generation of Birch Rock leaders and I'm so grateful for the others who have paved the way. To this day, my closest friends – my deepest water – are Birch Rockers, many of whose names appear with mine on that first plaque on the porch of Pete's Palace.



Gage

WISH LIST

BRC appreciates your contributions to the camp community. Some items we wish for are:

Framed Backpacks (\$100 each)
New Sunfish Sailboat – (\$4000)
Art Supplies & Equipment (\$500)
Outdoor Commercial Grill – (\$6000)
Drill Press for Shop Program (\$300)
New Archery Targets (\$500)

Birch Rock is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation.
All donations received are tax-deductible.

Please contact us at birchrock@birchrock.org if you might be able to accommodate any of these wishes.

Thank you!

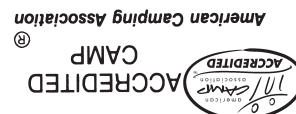
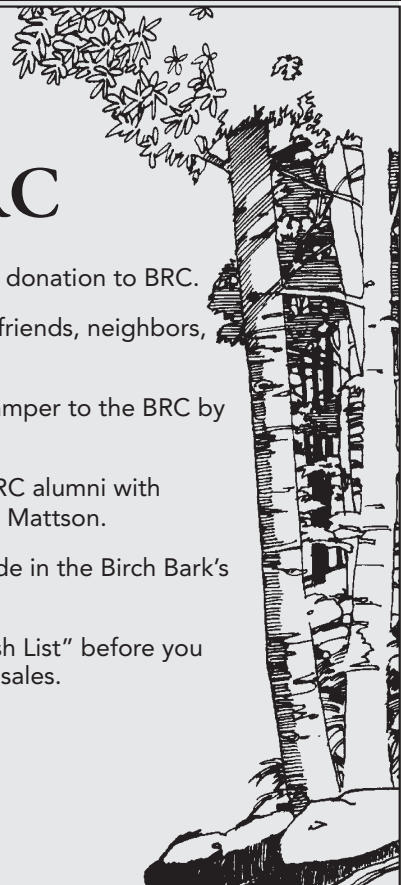
Mark Your Calendars for 2013!



BRC Summer Office Opens	June 3, 2013
BRC Senior Staff Orientation	June 12
BRC Staff Orientation	June 14
C.I.T. Orientation	June 19
BRC Opening 1st Session	June 23
Cubs Camp I	June 23
Cubs Camp I ends	July 6
Cubs Camp II begins	July 7
BRC 1st Session Ends	July 20
Cubs Camp II ends	July 20
Opening 2nd Session	July 21
Maine Wilderness Adventure Cubs Camp III begins	July 21
Alumni & Trustee Day	July 27
Cubs Camp III ends	August 3
BRC for Boys ends	August 10
MWA ends	August 10
BRC Family Camp	August 16
BRC Family Camp ends	August 20

It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to the BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in the Birch Bark's Alumni News column.
- Ask us about our "Wish List" before you have your spring yard sales.



BIRCH ROCK CAMP

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED